

**Written Statement before the U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security,
Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight**

***“THE 2009 QUADRENNIAL HOMELAND
SECURITY REVIEW”***

A Statement by

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Chairman Carney, ranking member Rogers, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify on the status of the Department of Homeland Security's Quadrennial Homeland Security Review. It is a subject of critical importance and I am honored to have the opportunity to share my views with you.

I would like to focus in my remarks on the role of the QHSR, the challenges the review seems to be facing initially, and lessons learned from the Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review that may be relevant to DHS as it conducts its first review of this kind.

The Role of the QHSR

The Quadrennial Homeland Security Review has the potential to be a very important first step in DHS's strategic planning process as it looks to the future. Done well, the QHSR will set the agenda and define priorities for DHS through 2012. It is an opportunity to look beyond the near-term, 12 to 18 month issues and chart a course for what the next Administration wants to achieve in the area of homeland security over the next four years. The QHSR report will likely include an in-depth discussion of the nation's homeland security strategy and articulate the new Administration's strategic priorities and their programmatic implications. The report should describe how DHS will work with its federal partners, as well as its many other stakeholders, to coordinate activities and programs to greatest effect.

DHS has not undertaken a strategic level review since 2005 when Secretary Chertoff conducted the Second Stage Review shortly after being named secretary. Moreover, the Second Stage Review was primarily an organizational review while the QHSR offers the opportunity to look not only at organizational issues, but also issues of strategy, policy, process, program and budget. Given the inherently interagency, inter-government and multidisciplinary nature of homeland security, it is critical that in conducting its quadrennial review, DHS reaches out to a wide array

of stakeholders in a way that is unprecedented for a federal agency. Equally important for DHS will be ensuring that its review process is consistent with the themes and priorities that will be articulated in the new Administration's national security strategy, whether that is articulated in a single, consolidated document or two separate documents, a national security strategy and a national homeland security strategy.

Challenges Facing the QHSR

DHS faces considerable challenges as it undertakes its first quadrennial review. Among these challenges are the timing of the review, its scope, resources for the review, and the need to coordinate with a wide array of stakeholders.

By law, DHS must submit a final report on the QHSR to Congress by December 31, 2009. In practice, this means that much of the review will be conducted while there are still very few political appointees in place in DHS to run the process. If past is precedent, many political appointees will not be confirmed until the late spring and summer of 2009. Although DHS is working hard to enable a smooth transition to the new Administration, there is no getting around the fact that there will be few appointees in place for the first several months of the QHSR, they will have a steep learning curve, and it will be difficult to conduct a truly strategic review with a relatively small number of senior leaders facing a compressed review timeline and a requirement to include in the review an unprecedented number of internal and external stakeholders.

In a similar vein, at the same time DHS is conducting its review, the Administration as a whole is likely to be developing its national security strategy. In an ideal world, the White House would develop and promulgate a National Security Strategy (NSS) first, and then cabinet agencies would begin their quadrennial reviews, guided squarely by the strategic direction provided in the NSS. Given the timelines mandated by law for the QHSR however, DHS cannot afford to delay the review until completion of the NSS. DHS must begin its review as soon as the new

leadership of DHS is in place and simply place a premium on coordinating its efforts with the White House as thinking on the broader strategy develops and is refined.

Just as the White House will be developing the NSS in parallel to the QHSR, the Department of Defense also will be conducting its Quadrennial Defense Review, which is likely to have implications for DHS and other federal agencies, at the same time. Conducting the QHSR while also staying abreast of developments in the QDR process will be an additional challenge for DHS.

The scope of the QHSR presents additional challenges. Congress has required that the review result in a report that describes the national strategy for homeland security, outlines and prioritizes critical homeland security mission areas, describes the capabilities, infrastructure, preparedness levels and budget necessary to successfully execute the national homeland security strategy, assesses the organizational adequacy of DHS to its mission, and reviews the ability of DHS to translate homeland security requirements into its budget and acquisition strategy. This is a very broad agenda for a review that is to be completed in one year, particularly given that for the first six months of the review DHS is likely to have a very small leadership cadre. As I will discuss in more detail in the next part of my testimony, determining an appropriate scope for the quadrennial review is one of the most important determinants of whether the review will succeed or fail. Size matters, and in this case, bigger is not always better.

Given the timing of the QDR as well as its scope, in order for the review to conclude successfully at the end of 2009, work on the review has to begin today – and it has. That said, there is an inherent tension in beginning a review under the current leadership that will conclude under the new Administration. No matter what party wins the presidential election, the incoming team will want to take a fresh look at DHS and is likely to be somewhat skeptical of work done in advance for the QHSR. DHS can make the most of the work it does on the QHSR in the

remaining months by focusing its preparatory analysis on framing and describing key issues and options without trying to guide the new team toward predetermined outcomes.

Given the timing, scope and complexity of the QHSR – not to mention that this will be the first QHSR conducted by DHS – it is difficult not to be concerned as an outside observer by the scant resources apparently devoted to the task so far. In its March report to Congress this year, DHS reported that it is requesting \$1.65 million and 2 new positions for the QHSR process. The core QHSR work team will be comprised of six personnel. There will be additional QHSR work teams, although their numbers and size were not clear from the report. The QHSR and the QDR are different processes, and the DoD QDR process is by no means perfect and should not be mindlessly replicated. At the same time, as someone who participated directly in the 1997 DoD QDR process and who observed subsequent QDR processes closely, it is very hard to see how this level of funding and staff resources can be adequate to the demands of a major strategic review process. The Office of the Secretary of Defense already has multiple offices with dozens of personnel working on preparing for the upcoming QDR. The budget for the OSD Policy office alone during the 2006 QDR was more than the current DHS QHSR budget. A major strategic review is time-consuming, intellectually and bureaucratically demanding. To complete a task of this magnitude successfully with 6 people and less than \$2 million would be a truly heroic achievement.

Finally, to be successful, the QHSR will need to involve not just members of the federal interagency, but also stakeholders in state and local governments as well as tribal organizations, the private sector and the non-governmental sector. This will require an unprecedented level of outreach and will add a significant layer of complexity to the QHSR process. Structuring a major review to be sufficiently comprehensive and inclusive to achieve much-needed “buy in” while avoiding the pitfalls of “death by meeting” and lowest common denominator solutions is very difficult. Particularly once the new leadership team is in place at DHS, the department will need to look carefully at how it structures the review process to involve the full range of its

internal and external stakeholders without losing the strategic focus on the review. DHS will also need to think carefully about how it can remain abreast of developments in DoD's QDR process when it does not have the personnel resources to participate in all aspects of what is likely to be another wide-ranging QDR process.

QDR Lessons Learned for the QHSR

Although there are significant differences between DoD's Quadrennial Defense Review and DHS's Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, DoD's experience with several such reviews do offer certain lessons learned that may be useful to consider as the DHS process gets underway.

First, DHS's senior leadership must lead and be engaged in the QHSR process. Without leadership by the Secretary of Homeland Security or the Deputy Secretary, the QHSR is likely to lack focus, be captured by DHS components and devolve into nothing more than a budget drill. This would be a serious lost opportunity. In light of the compressed timeframe for the review and in order to ensure the review has a tight focus and is strategy-driven, the new Secretary would be wise to set his or her QHSR priorities as early as possible and develop the new homeland security strategy by early summer 2009 at the latest.

Second, limiting the scope of the QHSR will be critical. The QHSR cannot be an A to Z examination of every single issue facing the Department of Homeland Security, much less every homeland security challenge facing the federal government. A QHSR that tries to solve every pressing problem is likely to provide very few answers at the end of the day. The next Secretary should pick a handful of critical issues around which to organize the QHSR, ensure the review retains its focus on those issues throughout the process, and resist the temptation to turn the QHSR into a super program review.

Third, the DHS bureaucracy should not over-prepare for the 2009 QHSR. The new Secretary and his or her team will have their own views and priorities, and are likely to view what has come before with skepticism. Career civil servants in DHS should focus on identifying and framing key problems and challenges that may be considered in the review without offering point solutions. The new Secretary is likely to place a small team of senior appointees and key front office staff in charge of the review, but it would also be wise for the new Secretary to supplement this leadership team with a handful of senior career staff to provide continuity and institutional knowledge through the transition period.

Fourth, DHS should engage its myriad stakeholders – including Congress – early in the process. Given the role the rest of the federal interagency plays in homeland security, and the role Congress plays in shaping the DHS budget and overseeing its activities, DHS would be wise to reach out to these stakeholders early in the QHSR process, and in a meaningful way. In addition to the federal government and Congress, DHS also has external stakeholders at the state and local government level as well as in the private and non-governmental sectors. DoD has not always engaged successfully with outside stakeholders, often waiting until very late in its reviews to bring those outside DoD into the process. DHS would be well-served to learn from the DoD experience and involve key stakeholders early, both to build support for its key priorities and to facilitate the QHSR implementation process when the review is complete.

Concluding Thoughts

DHS faces significant challenges in conducting its first quadrennial homeland security review. The timing of the review is less than ideal, resources being dedicated so far to the review are scarce, the breadth of issues that could be considered as part of the review are daunting, and the range of stakeholders with equities in the review process is unprecedented. In the near term DHS should focus on framing key issues that may be taken up as part of the QHSR process, and avoiding trying to pre-cook results of the QHSR. After the election, the new Administration will

need to move quickly to identify key priorities and strategic themes, put a leadership team in charge of the QHSR process and reach out early to the full range of stakeholders. Despite the challenges, the QHSR is an important strategic planning opportunity and should be given every opportunity to succeed. Thank you very much for inviting me to testify today, and I look forward to answering your questions.